

406 ÉMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND REFORMER

" and " Travail," Zola's writings show no trace of the passing storm. It was assumed by some critics, after the completion of the Rougon-Macquart novels, that "a new Zola " had arisen, the man who wrote " Lourdes," " Rome," and " Paris " being, said they, evidently very different from the one who had penned "Nana," "Pot-Bouille," and "La Terre." It was even asserted that this novelist who had been so obscene was becoming quite moral, at least for a man with such shocking antecedents. But the inanity of that contention is demonstrated by the facts of the case. The so-called obscene books were written by one who led a life of the most rigid personal rectitude, whereas the later volumes, which were received far more favourably, were the work of one whom passion had conquered. That should suffice to show how worthless is a certain kind of criticism. Moreover, any change that was noticed in Zola's writings was in one respect more apparent than real. In some of his books he had set down horrible and loathsome things because he had found them involved in his subject. Subsequently, being confronted by less mire, he naturally gave it less prominence. At the same time "Le Docteur Pascal" certainly marked a new departure in his manner. In his previous works, as we have remarked before, he had sunk his personality and had never

preached. In "Le
Docteur Pascal" he began to do so, and this
gradually
became a habit with him. The reason is not
far to seek.
For more than twenty years th^ critics had
constantly said
to him. : " If you must show the vileness of life,
you should
at least point the moral. You should deplore
such, terrible
things, denounce them, thunder at them in
your pages."
Remarks of that kind having been repeated
hundreds of